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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001357

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [UG](#) [US](#) [GHONDA](#) [ANTOINE](#) [BEMBA](#) [JEAN PIERRE](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY ATTEMPT TO ENSURE THAT FOREIGN MINISTER
GHONDA REMAINS IN OFFICE

1. (C) SUMMARY: In demarches to both President Kabila's Chef de Cabinet and Vice President Bemba, the Embassy argued that FM Ghonda was a key element in the success of the July 14 and 15 meetings in Washington. Given the importance of his likely contribution to future such negotiations, we argued that he be retained in office. The Chef de Cabinet said President Kabila was anxious to do so, but Bemba, who controlled the appointment in accordance with the Sun City Accords, was determined to replace him. We later argued our points with Vice President Bemba, but he seemed adamant in his decision to see Ghonda replaced. However, the decision has not yet been announced, so the question may perhaps still be open. End Summary.

2. (C) On July 16 the Embassy received a request from AF/DAS Yamamoto that we approach senior GDRC officials to urge that Foreign Minister Ghonda be retained in office. This followed a number of reports, in the press and in our conversations, indicating that FM Ghonda's removal was being demanded of President Kabila by Vice President Bemba. This was reportedly at the urging of Uganda President Museveni who was displeased with Ghonda's attitude during the recent meetings in Abuja.

3. (C) Seizing an opportunity during a meeting already scheduled with President Kabila's Chef de Cabinet, Evariste Boshab, Charge' raised the issue of Ghonda's future. Boshab listened to our view that Ghonda had been particularly helpful in bringing the meetings at the Department on July 14 and 15 on increasing peace and stability in the Great Lakes region to a successful conclusion (especially favorable to the interests of the DRC) and that his continued participation in follow-on negotiations was important to their success. Boshab said that Vice President Bemba had indeed insisted that President Kabila dismiss Ghonda - as was Bemba's right given that the Foreign Ministryship is one of the positions which the MLC (Movement for Congolese Liberation) controls as agreed to in the Sun City Accords.

4. (C) President Kabila resisted this, and was especially unhappy with Bemba's proposed replacement, Raymond Ramazani Baya, formerly Ambassador to Paris. Kabila had gone so far as to say he would not work with Mr. Baya even if he were required to appoint him.

5. (C) Boshab said he would take our views to the President immediately (there was a cabinet meeting in session). He suggested we see Bemba and also Speaker of the House Kamitatu who, he thought, could influence Bemba.

6. (C) We had, in fact, already meant to see Bemba who finally got back to the Charge' at about 8:30 p.m. on the 16th. The Charge' and the Political Counselor drove to Bemba's residence and were received by him in his living room where he had been watching television (and which he continued to do sporadically out of the corner of his eye during our presentation.)

7. (C) The Charge' complimented Bemba on the high quality of the ministerial appointments he had offered to the Government. We noted that not least of these was Foreign Minister Ghonda who had been a key element in the success of the talks in Washington. The State Department at the highest levels had been impressed and hoped that he could continue in that office since further delicate negotiations were coming up. The USG was committed to supporting peace and stability in the region, something very much in the interests of the GDRC, and hoped that, while acknowledging that ministerial appointments were entirely a question for the sovereign authorities to consider, our views as friends of the DRC would be taken into account.

8. (C) Bemba was distinctly not impressed. Without ever mentioning Museveni as a factor in his decision, he said that he had already asked President Kabila to discharge Ghonda. The Minister was incompetent and treated his responsibilities with culpable lack of serious attention. Dossiers were not prepared, the MFA was not properly administered, Cabinet was left without analytical position papers, and Ghonda, like some student who neglected his studies and tried to cram at the last minute, went off to conferences without having done his homework. Bemba could not let such conduct continue.

9. (C) We countered that at least we hoped that in consideration of our views and the excellent results of the

State Department meetings any decision could be put off until Ghonda returned with his report.

110. (C) Bemba refused. He then launched into a speech about his six years of political activity meant entirely for the good of his country, and the high esteem in which he had been held by, among others Ambassador Richard Holbrook "who always took my telephone calls, even when he was in a meeting." This was in contrast to the fact that he had never met the Secretary of State and that he had yet to receive an official

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invitation to Washington. True, he had been told by Ambassador Yamamoto that he would always be welcomed, but that was not the same thing as a proper invitation with all that such implied.

111. (C) The press reports that Ghonda returned to Kinshasa late on 7/19. Since the decision to fire him has not been announced, there is some chance it will be reversed. But Bemba's unyielding attitude does not bode well. Given the delicate relations Bemba has with Olivier Kamitatu, we decided not to pursue that path, it being our judgment it could well cause more harm than good.

SCOTT